

What is FIA?

The National Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program of the USDA Forest Service has been in continuous operation since 1930. Our mission is to conduct and continuously update a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the present and prospective conditions of the renewable resources of the forest and rangelands of the United States. This national program consists of five regional FIA units. The Interior West FIA (IW-FIA) unit, part of the Rocky Mountain Research Station, conducts inventories in the States indicated below:



Originally, forest lands within each unit's region were inventoried one State at a time, progressing from State to State until all the forests in the region had been surveyed, at which time the inventory cycle began again. In 2000, FIA changed nationally to an annual inventory. At full funding, 10 percent of each State in the Interior West will be inventoried each year to detect change and provide updated data.

The initial focus was to estimate the extent, volume, and condition of live trees as a source of marketable timber available for harvest. Over the years, our mission has expanded to address the information needed by our diverse customers. While timber is still important, we now also have the data to assess plant diversity, fuels and potential fire hazard; condition of wildlife habitats; mortality and risk associated with fire, insects, or disease; biomass, carbon storage, forest health, and other general characteristics of forest ecosystems.

Why is FIA Important?

FIA provides objective and scientifically credible information on how much forest there is, what it looks like, whether the forest area is increasing or decreasing, whether we are gaining or losing species, how quickly trees are growing, dying, and being harvested, and how forest ecosystems change over time with respect to the soil and other vegetative community attributes. Such information has many important uses including:

- Helping policymakers at the Federal and State level formulate good forest policy and assess the sustainability of current and past policy.
- Enabling land managers to devise better management plans and to assess the effects of current and past management practices on the land.
- Serving as a baseline for scientific investigations in a variety of areas that involve changes in forest ecosystems over time.
- Formulating business plans that will be both economically and ecologically sustainable over time.
- Keeping the public informed about the health and sustainability of the Nation's forests.

FIA is the only program that provides consistent and credible annual data for all forest lands (public and private) within the United States. FIA covers all forest lands of the United States including Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and U.S. Pacific Territories.



How the Inventory is Conducted

Nationally, FIA collects a common set of data by using techniques and methods that are consistent across the country. This core data set is enhanced in the Interior West to address special needs and interests.

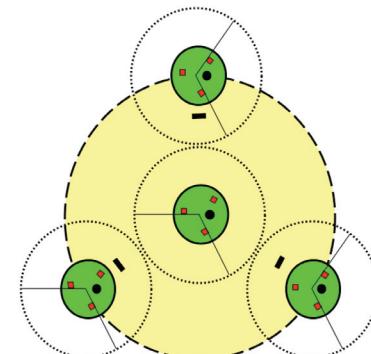
The program consists of three phases:

Phase 1 uses remote sensing imagery or aerial photography to classify land as forest or nonforest and to create broad-scale maps of forest attributes and landscape patterns.

Phase 2 consists of permanently established field plots distributed across each State at a sample intensity of about one plot per 6,000 acres. Each plot consists of a cluster of four subplots spread out over about 2.5 acres. Most phase 2 data are related to the tree and understory vegetation components of the forest.

Phase 3 is designed to further assess forest health by sampling a subset of phase 2 plots with additional health indicator measures. Plots are visited only during the growing season. Examples of data collected in phase 3 include soil attributes, down woody material, plant species occurrence, lichen diversity, and the extent of ozone injury.

Phase 2/Phase 3 Plot Design



Subplot (trees and understory)	24.0 ft (7.32 m) radius
● Microplot (seedlings/saplings/fuels)	6.8 ft (2.07 m) radius
○ Macroplot (large trees, misc.)	58.9 ft (17.95 m) radius
■ Lichens plot (P3)	120.0 ft (36.60 m) radius
■ Vegetation plot (P3)	3.2 ft ² (1.0 m ²) area
◆ Soil sampling (P3)	(point sample)
▽ Down woody material (P3)	58.9 ft (17.95 m) transects

Data Analysis and Research



Forest resource reports are available for individual States and National Forests; data and tables are available on the Web or by special request, and updated annual inventory data are available each June. Many other issue-driven analyses and studies are then conducted to further investigate conditions and trends revealed in initial analyses.

Techniques research improves the efficiency of the inventory, improves the quality of our products, and develops new spatial products to meet the changing needs of our partners and customers. Research topics include sampling, estimation, mapping, Web applications, and quality assessment. Researchers contribute to advances in modeling and estimation, evaluate new remote sensing technologies, and explore strategies for mapping vegetation in support of a variety of land management needs.

Partnership and cooperation strengthen our analyses and research. Partners contribute both assistance and resources to enhance the IW-FIA Program. We work closely with our States and National Forest Systems — Regions 1, 2, 3, and 4, the Forest Service Remote Sensing and Application Center, State and Private Forestry, Forest Health Protection; other government agencies — Bureau of Land Management, United States Geological Survey, National Park Service, and State Natural Resource Departments; and a variety of university cooperators.

Timber Product Output (TPO)

The FIA program tracks and reports on wood harvested from America's forests. Timber Product Output studies are typically conducted through surveys sent to the wood processors, such as timber mills.



Who Uses FIA Information?

- State and National Forest policy decisionmakers
- State Foresters
- Industry and consultants
- Environmental organizations
- Forest Service officials
- Land managers
- Native American Tribes
- Researchers
- Journalists
- Interested private citizens

How are FIA Data Used?

- For comprehensive assessments and analysis of forest resources. These analyses include status and trends in the extent, condition, health, and uses of forests.
- Assessment of forest composition and structure at the landscape scale; and their relation to habitat conditions, susceptibility to insects and disease, and response to disturbance.
- Evaluation of effects of land use change on fire risk, economic productivity of forest land, wildlife habitat quality, carbon sequestration dynamics, and others.
- Development of new inventory techniques.



Privacy Policy

In the FY2000 Consolidated Appropriations Bill (PL 106-113), Congress included language that modified the Food Security Act of 1985 (7 U.S.C. 2276(d)) to add FIA data collection to a list of items requiring confidential treatment. Among other things, the law prevents FIA from disclosing sample locations in such a way that individual ownership can be determined, and specifies criminal penalties for violations.

Current FIA policy (Forest Service Handbook Interim Directive number 4809.11-2003-1) permits public release of FIA sample coordinates rounded to the nearest 1/2 to 1 mile with a random set of locations swapped within a State. Such inexact coordinates prevent association of individual sample locations with individual owners, but will still meet the needs of users looking for approximate geographical location of data.

Privacy Principles:

- We obtain landowner permission prior to collecting data.
- We never release the name or address of private landowners to the general public.
- We require any person or organization providing products or services to FIA to protect the confidentiality of FIA information on our behalf through a data security certification process.
- We allow reporting of data only in such a manner that individual landowners cannot be identified.

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